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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. von WAGNER (Germany)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

OBSERVANCE OF DISARMAMENT WEEK

1. The CHAIRMAN recalled the proclamation by the General Assembly of the week starting 24 October, the day of the foundation of the United Nations, as a week devoted to fostering the objectives of disarmament. In the post-cold-war era, there was a growing conviction that disarmament had rendered its service and could be given lower priority or even disregarded. That view, was supported by notable achievements in 1993, such as the entry into force of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, initiating an unprecedented conventional weapons reduction programme; the signing of the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II); the signing of the Convention on Chemical Weapons, under which an entire category of weapons of mass destruction would be banned and which, given the necessary support by as many signatory States as possible, could enter into force by January 1995; and preparatory work for the 1995 review conference on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the primary aim of which would be to safeguard the continued validity of that Treaty. He noted both encouraging and disturbing developments within the NPT, namely, the declaration by a new participant that it had halted a secret nuclear-weapons programme, thus preparing the ground for the total denuclearization of Africa, on the one hand, and, on the other, the unprecedented announcement by another State that it would withdraw from the Treaty. In addition, the Geneva Conference on Disarmament had achieved a breakthrough in reaching consensus on a negotiating mandate for a comprehensive, verifiable ban on nuclear testing.

2. The indisputable progress in disarmament over the course of the previous year had been linked to historic changes in the international political climate. While the end of the cold war had eliminated bipolar confrontation in world politics, the resulting diversification of the security environment had created new difficulties in harmonizing national security interests. The monitoring of military power had become more difficult, and efforts were needed, in a number of priority areas, to adapt the arms control and international security agenda to its new conditions.

3. First, more must be done to halt the further spread of weapons of mass destruction. For that endeavour to succeed, control efforts must involve potential suppliers as well as potential recipients and non-proliferation efforts must not be perceived as endangering cooperation.

4. With regard to conventional armaments, the objectives were less clear. Arms control and confidence-building measures must, however, play a major role in preventing conflicts, in line with the Secretary-General's concept of preventive diplomacy, as expanded on by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/120. Close attention must be given to the real conflicts of the real world, to determine whether or not the existing resolutions adopted by the Committee provided a sufficient basis for the task of conflict prevention and fostering security through arms control.

5. It was inevitable that the focus within arms control and disarmament would shift from negotiation to implementation. Cooperation between treaty partners in the areas of compliance would become increasingly important for security- and

(The Chairman)

confidence-building, creating a basis for the transition from a military to a contractual security guarantee. Such an agreement would also serve as an early warning system in the event of dangerous developments.

6. Finally, countries unable to meet their disarmament obligations must be given the necessary support. Disarmament assistance had fast become a new task in arms control, not restricted to military security interests but encompassing such international and global problems as Chernobyl and the ozone hole.

7. Mr. INSANALLY (President of the General Assembly) said that, while the end of the cold war had removed the threat of nuclear confrontation between the super-Powers, the dangers of nuclear proliferation had raised new alarms in people's minds. During the general debate, several initiatives to reverse that trend had been announced, including the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to open negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT). Progress towards that goal would also strengthen hope for an unconditional extension of the NPT. In addition, the Chemical Weapons Convention would further diminish the threat of proliferation when it entered into force and was implemented by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Encouraging progress had been made in developing a verification mechanism for the Biological Weapons Convention.

8. With regard to conventional weapons, he noted the positive trend towards increasing openness and transparency, and strongly supported the proposal of a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land mines and the convening of a review conference on the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

9. In addition, export control measures could seek to facilitate bona fide access to high technology and to prevent the diversion of technology to weapons proliferation. Strengthening the role of the United Nations in the verification of compliance with arms limitation and disarmament agreements would serve to enhance its preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping capabilities.

10. At the regional level, work was under way on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and regional bodies to strengthen political cooperation and promote security. While primary responsibility for regional security rested with the individual States in that region, the United Nations should assist groups of States in developing security mechanisms. To that end, he suggested convening, under United Nations auspices, a meeting of regional organizations on closer cooperation in United Nations peace and security efforts.

11. Mr. GOULDING (Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs) said that, given the mistrust which had dominated international relations over the 15 years since the first commemoration of Disarmament Week, the United Nations had made major achievements in disarmament, such as the Bacteriological (Biological) Convention, the NPT, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and the START agreements, the Agreement on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the global ban on chemical weapons.

(Mr. Goulding)

12. The end of the cold war had created new opportunities for the Organization to promote international peace and security, yet the world appeared to be drawn daily into an ever-deeper mire of regional conflict, ethnic strife and internal violence. While the Organization could justifiably claim credit for some successes, conflicts on every continent took a daily toll of human life, resulting in an unprecedented growth in demands for the preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping services of the United Nations. The Secretary-General believed that the Organization's disarmament and arms control tools and techniques should be employed in the efforts he was making in response to demands from Member States, since disarmament was an inherent part of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building.

13. There were three areas in which those tools and techniques could be valuably applied to United Nations peace and security efforts: the prevention of conflicts, their containment and their resolution.

14. With regard to conflict prevention, preventive diplomacy was often most successful when it was invisible and therefore underrated in the media. The main difficulty lay in persuading States or other parties concerned to accept United Nations involvement in helping to resolve their disputes before it was too late. To that end, efforts were being made to identify ways in which confidence-building measures could be used at a regional level to allay the fears which caused countries to accumulate arms, thereby provoking conflicts which might otherwise be averted. Such measures included risk-reduction centres, where regional leadership groups and the United Nations could hold consultations with parties to potential conflicts, and solidarity missions which, as demonstrated by the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, could forestall the developments of tensions within States and promote the exchange of information and other confidence-building measures among them. Finally, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms - while not a substitute for arms reductions - had introduced a new transparency in that area and could prove to be a valuable instrument of preventive diplomacy. Already some 80 countries had submitted data to the Register, and ultimately it would contribute to stability in the world.

15. With regard to conflict containment, the Organization's traditional technique had been peace-keeping, using methods derived from standard military practices. Peace-keeping had evolved over previous years, however, and peace-keeping operations were now often mandated to perform disarmament-related tasks, such as verifying agreements on the control and non-resupply of weapons and the non-return of foreign forces and supervising heavy weapons restrictions and no-fly zones. Valuable experience was also being gained in weapons-related fact-finding and on-site inspections, such as those conducted by the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and by IAEA in the nuclear field and in the implementation of the INF Treaty and, potentially, START.

16. Finally, disarmament techniques had a role to play in United Nations assistance in implementing complex agreements to settle inter-State or internal conflicts and, at the same time, to help put in place new structures for peace. Work was currently under way in the Secretariat on a comprehensive survey of the

techniques, including disarmament techniques, which could be used to support post-conflict peace-building, such as the disposal of weapons, the reintegrationof demobilized soldiers into civilian society and the clearance of land mines. The value of such work had been stressed by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "New dimensions of arms regulation and disarmament in the post-cold-war era" (A/C.1/47/7). In addition, it was vital that provisions for weapons control should form a part of United Nations-brokered settlements.

17. In conclusion, he stressed that the potential contribution of arms control and disarmament techniques to peace-building efforts by the Organization would be lost if the parties themselves were not prepared to honour their commitments and accept the support of the international community. The disarmament community had a wealth of experience to offer to those engaged in conflict control and resolution, and he therefore looked forward to the contribution by Committee members to the Organization's cooperative work to address those major challenges.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.